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REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PADIS ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE WEST AFRICAN (NIAMEY-BASED MULPOC) SUBREGION, FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 1989-DECEMBER 1990

I. Activities of PADIS with special reference to the subregion

1. During the period under review, PADIS carried out advisory as well as training activities in the subregion. The following activities were carried out within the subregion.

Training

a. Subregional training workshop for heads of documentation centres, in PADIS methodologies and the use of micro-CDS/ISIS software, for countries covered by the West African Niamey based MULPOC, 18-22 September 1989, Niamey, Niger.

b. Study tour to the Soviet Union on the management of scientific, technological and socio-economic information, 15-27 October 1989. Benin, Togo, Guinea, and Senegal participated in this study tour.

c. Training course for documentalists from English speaking countries covered by CIRDAFRICA, in PADIS methodologies, 23-28 October 1989, Nairobi, Kenya. PADIS sponsored staff from Ghana and Nigeria.

d. Training course for documentalists from French Speaking countries covered by CIRDAFRICA, in PADIS methodologies, 6-11 November 1989, Brazzaville, Congo. PADIS sponsored staff from Benin, Senegal and Burkina Faso.

e. Regional seminar on the management of national and institutional documentation centres and services in Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 11-15 December 1989. Nigeria, Togo and Senegal participated in this workshop

f. Training course in PADIS methodologies and the use of micro-CDS/ISIS software for staff of some Library Schools in Africa, 26 March - 6 April 1990, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Staff from the University of Ghana, University of Dakar and the ECA, Niamey-based MULPOC benefitted from the training.

g. Training staff in PADIS methodologies and the use of micro-CDS/ISIS software, 17-27 April 1990, Accra, Ghana. 29 staff from various centres in Ghana benefitted from this training.

h. Training course in PADIS methodologies and the use of micro CDS/ISIS software for staff of the Ministry of Planning in Burkina Faso from 20-27 July 1990. 10 information professionals from the Ministry of Planning benefitted from the training course.

i. Training course in desktop publishing, 26 November to 5 December 1990, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. One staff member from the Association of African Universities based in Accra, Ghana benefitted from the training.

j. Regional workshop on "Human Resources Development for the management of information and documentation centres in Africa, Harare, 10-14 December 1990. Nigeria and Ghana participated in this workshop.

Advisory Services

2. During the period under review, PADIS at the request of member States and institutional participating centres and international organizations, delivered advisory services on a wide range of topics relating to development information management. The following advisory missions were undertaken:

a. to Ghana to assess national needs for development information infrastructure, 20-29 January 1990.

b. to the African Association of Science Editors, on its participation as an institutional participating centre in the PADIS network, at its regional conference held in Ibadan, Nigeria from 1-5 March 1990.

c. to the Institute of Development Economics and Planning (IDEP), to assess institutional needs for development information management capabilities and its potential as a PADIS institutional participating centre, Dakar, Senegal, 30 April - 5 May 1990.

d. to the African Development Bank (ADB), Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 30-31 July 1990 for the inclusion of an information-documentation component in the ADB training course.

e. to the African Regional Centre for Technology, on the utilization of microcomputers and appropriate software for information processing, Rabat, Morocco, 22-25 October 1990.

f. at the Fifth ECA/UNESCO joint concertation meeting, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 November 1990.

Selective dissemination of information

3. The number of participants in the Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) service which regularly informs individuals and/or institutions about references of publications in the areas of interest to them now stands at 42 in the subregion.

4. Users in the subregion also benefited from PADIS' documents distribution of printed products (437 individuals/institutions from the subregion are included in the PADIs mailing list), customized question and answer (57 requests received and answered from the subregion during the period under consideration) and documents delivery services (528 documents or microfiche were supplied in response to requests from the subregion). In addition, a number of countries as well as the subregional centre itself actively contributed inputs to the PADIS regional information system. These included Benin, Niger and Togo. It is expected that

inputs should be forthcoming shortly from other countries in the subregion which have benefitted from PADIS training, such as Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. With regard to institutional participating centres, the following institutions from the subregion signed institutional participating centre agreements with PADIS during this period:

a. Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA);

b. Association of African Universities (AAU);

c. Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys (RECTAS);

d. Regional Remote Sensing Centre (CRTO);

e. Centre Régional d'Energie Solaire (CRES);

f. Centre Régional de Documentation et d'Information Commerciales (CRIC).

5. The Sixth Session of ECA Council of Ministers held in Cotonou, Benin in March 1983 adopted resolution 12 inviting PADIS to establish the West African Documentation and Information System (WADIS). Since then attempts to establish WADIS have been slow and to date without great success. Despite extended negotiations, the Government of the Republic of Niger has not signed the Headquarters Agreement as requested by ECA. Hence, WADIS has been hosted by the Niamey MULPOC. To date the following investment has been carried out to make WADIS operational:

- A site for WADIS operations has been prepared in the MULPOC Office;
- HP 3000 Computer equipment has been purchased and delivered since 1985 but is not yet installed;
- One MULPOC documentalist was trained in PADIS methodologies and the operation of the WADIS documentation centre;
- One United Nations Volunteer computer scientist has been trained in the management and operation of the HP 3000 and Minisis software and in computer networking for the benefit of the WADIS subregion. (He will play the role of computer systems manager);
- Training in PADIS methodologies has been given to countries participating in WADIS.

In order to put this situation in perspective, it is useful to review the origins of the subregional centres.

6. PADIS activities are geared towards three levels of operation: National Participating Centres, Subregional Centres and Institutional Participating Centres;

(the latter being African regional or sub-regional institutions to which two or more States are parties. this includes both governmental and non-governmental institutions that are active in development information). However, while the operationalization of National Centres and Institutional Participating Centres have been carried out as planned, Subregional Centres are not yet operational at the level initially anticipated, except for the North African Development Information System (NADIS) which is hosted by the Arab League Documentation Centre (ALDOC).

Background

7. When PADIS was established, it was to have a Central Co-ordinating Office in Addis Ababa, four subregional centres based on economic or geographic groupings, one focal point in each country and specialized regional/subregional centres. Much of the substantive work of PADIS was to be carried out by the subregional centres with the assistance of the PADIS Central Co-ordinating Office, which would mainly be responsible for the overall system co-ordination and the administration of the budget. The latter reports to the Regional Technical Committee which normally meets once every two years.

8. The ECA Conference of Ministers at its Seventh Session held in Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahariya in April 1982 approved Resolution 438/XVII which, *inter alia*, requested the ECA Executive Secretary "... to step up the mobilization of funds for the estalbishment of national and subregional centres..."

Role of subregional centres

9. The subregional centres were supposed to play a major role in the establishment of information services (where none exist) and in the improvement of existing services. These centres would further forge links among all the countries of the subregion allowing them to utilize one another's information resources as well as the information resources of the rest of the region. Helping each country in the subregion join in a network that would fully utilize information resources of the subregion and the region as a whole and co-ordinate the existing or future sectoral information systems are the main goals of subregional centres.

10. At the time of the resolution for the establishment of WADIS, the functions of the subregional centres were seen as the following:

- Organization of meetings at subregional level for the discussion and preparation of PADIS policies;

- Organization of training programmes and *stages* for national participating centres from the subregion;

- Implementation of data communication capabilities in order to play the role of sub-regional nodes of PADISNET.

- Installation of data processing capabilities in order to implement pools of sub-regional data bases and data banks with the collaboration of the PADIS [national and institutional] participating centres;

11. Thus of these, the first three have been implemented in the subregion, but from the PADIS central co-ordinating office, rather than from the subregion. The reason for this was the lack of personnel for this purpose at WADIS. Data processing capabilities have been installed but are not yet operational because of the lack of funds available for their maintenance and operation.

12. The retardation in development of subregional centres was largely because during the third phase of PADIS (1987-1991), PADIS has lacked funds for the full implementation of the subregional centres, including WADIS. PADIS' major source of funding (about 90% of available resources) during the period was the United Nations Development Programme. In granting the funding for this period, UNDP made the following comment:

> "The national centres should receive major priority in the next phase of the project. The role of the sub-regional centres should be restricted at this stage to coordination with and opening channels of communication to the national centres as well as providing feedback on the products and services of PADIS."

13. However, the project funding under RAF/86/053 (PADIS Phase III) did not provide any funding for even this limited role for WADIS and the other subregional centres. In order to promote the subregional centres, PADIs was forced to apply its regional resources for training, fellowships and advisory services to the subregional centres.

14. Despite the lack of financial means to make the subregional centres operational, the UNDP Evaluation Mission of PADIS (1990) (copies of the report of this Evaluation Mission are available to this Committee) recommended, because of the slow operationalization of some subregional centres, new developments in information technology and financial constraints, recommended the abandonment of non operational centres unless other sources of funding were found. Equipment already purchased would be transfered to one member State or one regional institution which would agree to sign the WADIS Headquarters Agreement.

15. The mission felt, however, that WADIS and the other subregional centres still had an important role, *viz*. "Provided adequate resources are made available, the sub-regional centers can play a useful role in bringing PADIS closer to the field and in decentralized efforts in the field of sensitization, training and advisory services. Main functions for the sub-regional centers as perceived in the field would be:

- closer presence of PADIS to National Participating Centers;
- partly take over training/advisory work from center;

- repackage and or compile development information (macro-economic, sectoral, project related and business) at the sub-regional level;

- monitor developments in user needs;

- monitor and where possible co-ordinate related activities under other projects, networks or sub-regional organizations."

16. Thus the problem immediately facing WADIS is a financial one. PADIS has no resources for its operation through the Niamey MULPOC in 1991. The amount needed is estimated at US$200,000/year for a computer systems analyst, an information scientist, data entry clerk, a secretary, and funds to maintain the computer, deliver advisory services and training.

17. The alternatives for making a PADIS subregional centre in West Africa a reality appear to be the following:

a. Retaining WADIS at the MULPOC, with the MULPOC to use its operational funds for staff and the maintenance of the computer (from which its administrative and substantive services will benefit), and PADIS to seek funds from other donors for the remaining components described above.

Finding a host country/institution for WADIS

Apart from MULPOC hosting WADIS, the following two other alternatives are proposed to the Subregional Technical Committee for review.

b. A West African country to host WADIS

As it is the case in Central Africa (CADIS) and partially in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESADIS), one country within the Niamey MULPOC region could agree to host the centre and assume costs therein. PADIS has received a mandate from ECA Executive Secretary to negotiate with any country willing to host the centre.

c. A regional West African institution to host WADIS

As it is the case in North Africa where NADIS is hosted by the League of Arab States, WADIS could be hosted by one West African regional institution. Among those institutions which could be considered is ECOWAS. With this option PADIS contribution would be technical assistance in form of supply of initial computer equipment and software, advisory services, training and fellowships and exchange of information. The regional institutions would take care of staff salaries, maintenance and operational costs. This solution implies that the statutes and by laws of the organization be compatible with the proposed WADIS centre and the ability of the organization to meet the necessary PADIS standards for information processing, storage and exchange. This option has its advantages and disadvantages.

♦ Advantages: In most of the regional institutions, there is availability of adequate human resources able to run and make operational WADIS, with adequate training from PADIS. Furthermore, these institutions are in a good position to secure funds and are closer to the countries they are supposed to serve. Finally this arrangement would accelerate the implementation of the project and would facilitate future cooperative effort with regard to the development of information systems in the subregion.

♦ Disadvantages: As most of the regional institutions are specialized in their subject area, there might arise a problem of delimitation of information they are supposed to collect and process in the framework of WADIS. Also, the selected institution might constitute a barrier between PADIS as central co-ordinating office and the participating countries.

Conclusion

18. Niamey MULPOC Officials have always been stressing the importance of WADIS for the region. Also, the countries have been urging ECA to take all necessary steps to make WADIS operational. However, it should be brought to the attention of the Subregional Technical Committee that the problem of future funding of WADIS on a sustainable basis should be seriously looked into. The Subregional Technical Committee is requested to suggest realistic solutions to make WADIS operational, or if these are not forthcoming, to recommend its suppression.